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**Paper Title “Planning for People OR Planning with People”**

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**Abstract**

Conventional urban plans and professionals engaged in making these plans usually operate under the mindset that; **We Are Planning FOR PEOPLE**. This attitude is rooted in a lack of on ground research, combined with un-informed policies, financially and politically disengaged governments, disinterested professional institutions and an absence of general public awareness resulting in inappropriate and substandard urban plans and designs. This situation often costs the city governments and concerned communities additional resources to adjust rectify and or replace these projects.

The need is for recognizing the parallel informal processes of development in all cities, of which communities are an integral part. Over time, there has been a raised awareness regarding the notions of community participation, partnerships and empowerment. However, these planning models often are not successful as the communities in question lack an awareness of their own potentials and if they do, do not have the appropriate technical expertise and tools to express it.

Therefore, even if at times the local governments and or the involved professionals may want to include the communities as partners in development work, they have no documentation of their financial, human, administrative and managerial capacities to participate in the development of their areas. This lack of historical, ecological, technical and socio-cultural data and knowledge incapacitates them to negotiate appropriate sustainable solutions, resulting in lost opportunities and defunct public realm.

To make sure that urban planning and development are a two way engaged process requires **Planning WITH PEOPLE**. This situation requires a new role and form of architectural and urban design practice(s) and practitioner(s). The conventional client or planner centered practice has to be redefined to that, of the designer/facilitator engaging with a multitude of stakeholders, working pro-actively with communities sharing technical expertise for supporting or initiating projects which make sustainable city processes accessible, adaptable and affordable for all citizens.

One such approach was developed within the practice of the author (with partner Christophe Polack) as a response to the situation explained above. The applicant’s practice consciously tried to highlight new relationships and their reconciliation in a transforming context by linking; research, academics and professional projects using research by design as a tool. Although, an unconventional and not often applied design practice model for the Pakistani context, it has resulted in bringing forth sustainable concepts and projects which can serve as a guideline for future practices of **Planning with People for a Sustainable Cities**.

Key words:

Planning with People, Communities, Formal and Informal Processes, Research by Design, Transforming Contexts.